

Message Text

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EXDIS, FOR SPIEGEL ONLY FROM WISNER

E.O. 11652:GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RH

SUBJECT: NEXT STEPS ON RHODESIA

1. THE SECRETARY SIGNED ON MAY 3 THE FOLLOWING MEMORANDUM
ON RHODESIA. THE VICE PRESIDENT APPROVED THE MEMORANDUM
MAY 5. WE UNDERSTAND BRZEZINSKI HAS A COPY. YOU MIGHT
SUGGEST TO THE SECRETARY THAT HE SPEAK WITH BRZEZINSKI
AND THE PRESIDENT ON THIS SUBJECT PRIOR TO THE SECRETARY'S
MAY 6 MEETING WITH OWEN AND NKOMO.

2. QUOTE: MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT
SUBJECT: NEXT STEPS ON RHODESIA

IN TRYING TO DEFINE OUR ROLE IN THE NEXT ROUND OF
NEGOTIATIONS ON RHODESIA, WE ARE CAUGHT BETWEEN THE
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EXPECTATIONS OF THE BRITISH ON THE ONE HAND AND THE CON-
CERNS OF THE AFRICAN NATIONALISTS ON THE OTHER.

THE AFRICANS HAVE BEEN OBJECTING TO AMERICAN PARTICIPATION
IN A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE FOLLOWING GROUNDS:
THEY ARE CONCERNED THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL WRONGLY
ASSUME SOME OF BRITAIN'S RESPONSIBILITIES AS THE COLONIAL

POWER AND MAY EASE PRESSURE ON BRITAIN; THEY ARE FEARFUL THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL TRY TO IMPOSE A "MODERATE",

WESTERN-ORIENTED GOVERNMENT ON ZIMBABWE; AND THUS THEY WORRY THAT IF THE UNITED STATES JOINS IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS, THE USSR AND OTHER AFRICAN STATES WILL ALSO INSIST ON PARTICIPATING.

IN THE PAST WEEK, THE BRITISH HAVE MOVED AWAY FROM THE IDEA OF ANNOUNCING A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE. INSTEAD, THEY WANT TO GO AHEAD IMMEDIATELY WITH BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS WITH THE VARIOUS PARTIES IN AFRICA ON THE CONTENT OF THE CONSTITUTION AND TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS. THEY INTEND TO ESTABLISH A SPECIAL LIAISON OFFICE IN DAR ES SALAAM FOR THIS PURPOSE AND APPOINT A SENIOR OFFICIAL TO CONDUCT THE NEGOTIATIONS. OWEN INSISTS THAT HE WILL NOT CONTINUE WITH HIS EFFORTS IF THE US DOES NOT PARTICIPATE IN JOINT UK-US DISCUSSIONS WITH SMITH AND THE AFRICAN LEADERS ON THE SUBSTANCE OF A CONSTITUTION.

WE AGREE WITH THE BRITISH THAT IT IS BEST TO BEGIN WITH BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS RATHER THAN A CONFERENCE FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:

-- THE AFRICANS HAVING REJECTED THE IDEA OF THE US PARTICIPATING DIRECTLY IN THEIR CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE, IT IS BEST TO CONTINUE WITH BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS INSTEAD.

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-- PROCEEDING WITH EARLY DISCUSSIONS ON THE SUBSTANCE OF A CONSTITUTION WOULD SERVE TO MAINTAIN MOMENTUM.

-- A CONFERENCE HELD IN THE VERY NEAR FUTURE PROBABLY WOULD NOT BE SUCCESSFUL. THE PARTIES ARE TOO FAR APART ON TOO MANY ISSUES. PRELIMINARY BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS COULD BUILD SOME BASIS FOR AGREEMENT BEFORE A CONFERENCE IS CALLED.

-- IT MAY BE THAT ALL THE MAJOR ISSUES WILL BE SETTLED IN THESE NEGOTIATIONS, AND US PRESENCE AT A CONFERENCE WILL NO LONGER BE NECESSARY.

THE PROBLEM THIS PRESENTS, HOWEVER, IS DEFINING A WAY "JOINT" UK/US DISCUSSIONS COULD BE HELD THAT WOULD SATISFY THE NEEDS OF BOTH THE BRITISH AND THE NATIONALISTS.

I RECOMMEND THAT WE ACCEPT OWEN'S PROPOSAL TO GO

AHEAD WITH "JOINT BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS" BUT MAKE THE ANNOUNCEMENT, DEFINE OUR ROLE AND PARTICIPATE IN A WAY THAT WOULD BE MOST ACCEPTABLE TO THE AFRICANS.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTENTIONS

WE AND THE BRITISH SHOULD APPROACH THE NATIONALISTS, AFRICAN LEADERS, SMITH AND VORSTER, BEFORE A JOINT ANNOUNCEMENT IS MADE TO EXPLAIN OUR AIMS, WHY US INVOLVEMENT AT THIS STAGE IS IMPORTANT, AND HOW IT WILL BE LIMITED. OUR ROLE COULD BE DEFINED ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES:

NEGOTIATING THE CONSTITUTION

EVEN THOUGH THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE PART OF ALL THE FIRST BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION,
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EITHER TOGETHER WITH THE BRITISH OR SEPARATELY, DEPENDING ON AFRICAN PREFERENCES, WE WOULD INSIST ON MAINTAINING FLEXIBILITY IN DEFINING OUR SUBSTANTIVE ROLE. FOR EXAMPLE, THE UNITED STATES COULD MAKE IT CLEAR WE DO NOT HAVE A SEPARATE POSITION ON THE CONSTITUTION; WE ONLY SEEK TO HELP ALL SIDES MOVE TOWARD A COMMON POSITION. OR, THE UNITED STATES COULD TAKE A POSITION ON ONLY THE MOST BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES, REMAINING SILENT ON MOST OR ALL OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL DETAILS.

FLEXIBILITY COULD BE RETAINED ON WHETHER THERE WILL BE A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE, WHETHER IT WOULD BE A SERIOUS NEGOTIATION OR A SIGNING CEREMONY, AND WHETHER THE UNITED STATES WOULD ATTEND.

DEALING WITH THE NATIONALISTS

WE SHOULD INFORM THE NATIONALISTS THAT WE DO NOT INTEND TO BECOME DEEPLY INVOLVED ON THE DETAILS OF THEIR CONSTITUTION, AND THAT WE SEE OUR ROLE AS MERELY ONE OF FACILITATING AGREEMENT ON BASIC PRINCIPLES AND HELPING THE BRITISH SEEK A REAL BASIS FOR SETTLEMENT. IN DEFINING ITS ROLE, THE UNITED STATES WOULD CONCENTRATE ON THE AREAS WHERE THE AFRICANS DO WANT US INVOLVEMENT -- PRESSURE ON SMITH AND VORSTER, ENCOURAGEMENT OF BRITAIN TO FULFILL ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AS THE COLONIAL POWER, AND HELP IN GUARANTEEING THE SETTLEMENT.

WE COULD CONDUCT OURSELVES DURING THE CONSULTATIONS IN A WAY THAT WILL BUILD AFRICAN CONFIDENCE: WE COULD MAKE A POINT OF TAKING NATIONALIST VIEWS SERIOUSLY AND

USE THEM AS THE BASIS FOR PROPOSALS PUT TO SMITH. WE
COULD DISCOURAGE BRITISH INTEREST IN SPLITTING THE
PATRIOTIC FRONT. WE COULD MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE
NATIONALIST GROUPS ARE TREATED IMPARTIALLY. WE COULD
SEE TO IT THAT NO UNDERSTANDINGS ARE REACHED WITH
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SMITH WHICH ARE NOT APPROVED BY THE NATIONALISTS.

THE VICE PRESIDENT AND ZBIG AGREE WITH THIS APPROACH.

RECOMMENDATION:

IF YOU APPROVE, I WILL PURSUE THIS COURSE IN MY MEETING
WITH OWEN ON MAY 6, MY SUBSEQUENT MEETING IN LONDON WITH
JOSHUA NKOMO, AND THROUGH OUR REPRESENTATIVES DEALING
WITH THE OTHER PARTIES. END QUOTE.
CHRISTOPHER

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